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ABSTRACT

Designed to show that highly participatory, engaging, entertaining, and locally understandable communication forms can be used not only to liberate but also to domesticate, this paper presents case studies of several nonformal education projects in Botswana that attempted to follow the approach of Paulo Freire by using popular theatre to encourage participation, raise issues, foster discussion, and promote collective action. Topics include "Laedza Batanani," the first experiment using theater for nonformal education in Botswana; popular theatre and resettlement education; popular theater and Freirian literacy work; and participatory research, puppetry, and appropriate technology. A systematic analysis of the issues involved clarifies earlier writing on the subject which failed to portray some of the key contradictions in this work and tended to mystify the popular base of this activity. Focus is on the pseudo-participatory nature of the program; the involvement of the villagers as actors, audience, and discussion members without allowing popular control over the process; and the direction of change. The dual potential of popular theatre is clarified--i.e., its capacity for authentic popular expression and raising critical class consciousness, and/or for disseminating dominant class ideas and inducing acceptance of the status quo. Fourteen references are listed. (LMM)

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Participatory Research Group

Working Paper No. 5, (Revised)

POPULAR THEATRE AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN BOTSWANA: A CRITIQUE OF PSEUDO-PARTICIPATORY POPULAR EDUCATION

By

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Paulo Freire has become a household word over the last decade and many development workers have attempted to implement his ideas, often without an adequate understanding of the conscientization process and the Copernican shift it requires in educational practice.

This paper is a case study of a number of non-formal education projects in Botswana which attempted to follow a Freirian approach. One of the key features of each programme is the use of popular theatre as the medium for encouraging participation, raising issues, fostering discussion, and promoting collective action.

The authors played an important role in the development of popular theatre as a tool for non-formal education in Botswana and have written extensively on it, primarily within an advocacy position. Since leaving Botswana they have had the benefit of distance, hindsight and fresh understandings of the political economy of development to make a more critical assessment of their work.

This paper is an attempt to demystify much of the earlier writing which failed to portray some of the key contradictions in this work and tended to mystify the popular base of this activity. In particular it will focus on the pseudo-participatory nature of the programme - the involvement of villagers as actors, audience, and discussion members without allowing popular control over the process and direction of change. The dual potential of popular theatre will be clarified: its capacity for both

- authentic popular expression and raising critical class consciousness, on one hand, and
- disseminating dominant class ideas and inducing acceptance of the status quo, on the other.

The earlier writings on popular theatre in Botswana concentrated on its role as a communication medium - the simplicity of popular theatre, its entertaining nature, its use of local languages,etc.

The purpose of this paper is to show that highly "participatory", "engaging", "entertaining", locally understandable forms of communication can be used not only to "liberate" but also to "domesticate".

The paper will begin with a description of each programme. In the final section the work will be systematically analyzed.

CASE 1: LAEDZA BATANANI

Laedza Batanani was the first experiment in using popular theatre for non-formal education in Botswana. It was started in 1974 in the Bokalaka area of northern Botswana by a community leader and two expatriate adult educators working in the area. Laedza Batanani developed out of their concern to overcome problems of low community participation and indifference to government development efforts in the area. Their basic goal was to find a way of motivating people to participate in development, of mobilizing the community around important local issues. What was needed was a means of bringing people together to discuss their problems, to agree on changes and to take collective action. This process of people meeting and working together was codified in a rallying slogan and theme song Laedza Batanani: "The sun is already up. It's time to wake up and come together for a common effort". This slogan reflected the basic notion of the project: it assumed that a major constraint on development was people's apathy and indifference and what was needed was a means of "sparking" people's interest and involvement.

This mobilizational, educational and collective action process required a new approach to non-formal education. The organizers rejected the existing approach of merely providing services and information; they felt this reinforced dependence and individualism rather than encouraging self-reliant and collective action. They wanted to get away from the elitism of agricultural extension services, finding a means of involving all rural villagers and not just the wealthier farmers or cattle-owners. They also saw this as an opportunity for a collaborative, inter-agency

approach - a positive move away from narrowly sectoral programming and lack of co-ordination and co-operation among extension workers.*

One of the organizers had previous experience with Freire's approach to literacy work and felt that this could be applied to community animation. Instead of using pictures as problem-posing "codes" for discussion, the organizers decided to use socio-drama. This seemed a much more lively medium for

- raising community issues (mirror)
- involving people in discussing the issues (community forum)
- mobilizing the people to get organized and take action on the issues (mobilizer).

In addition drama had the potential of being a good crowd-puller - an important asset in overcoming apathy towards community meetings.

Previous experiences with drama in workshops and conferences had shown the organizers that villagers were good at drama, took part in it with little self-consciousness, and enjoyed doing it. So drama seemed a good medium for ensuring active participation of local people in the running of the programme - for once villagers could be involved in presenting the programme (through drama) and not just responding to it as an audience. Participation then was seen as both a goal of the programme (i.e. to mobilize a large number of villagers in discussing and taking action on important local issues) and an important aspect of the methodology (i.e. community members were expected to help in planning and running the education/animation programme).

How does Laedza Batanani work? It is an annual

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* Since 1976 a mechanism has been instituted by government at village, district and national levels to increase the integration and co-ordination of these different sectors.

one-week "campaign" in which a team of extension workers and community leaders tour the six major villages in the area with a programme of popular theatre performances and community discussion. The campaign is preceded by a participatory planning process involving two major events:

- a community planning workshop (attended by traditional leaders, village development committee members, extension workers, and leaders of other community organizations) in which the participants working in groups "brainstorm" a list of community problems, select one or two priority and solvable problems, and then improvise some short skits to reflect the problems
- an actors' workshop in which a smaller group of extension workers and community leaders take the priority problems and create a more polished performance (including puppet skits, songs, and dances) for touring through the villages.

Once the planning and preparations have been made, the campaign is organized, normally in the period immediately before the ploughing season (September - October). During the one-week campaign the team of actor-animateurs organizes an afternoon programme in each of six villages. The performance is a mixed programme of two or three drama sketches, a puppet show, and several songs. After the last song the actors move immediately into the audience inviting them to form discussion groups. Each actor sits down with one of the groups and leads a discussion on the problems presented in the performance, and possible solutions. Afterwards everyone reassembles in the full meeting and each group gives its report. The chairperson summarizes the major proposals and tries to get some consensus on action to be taken.

Themes covered in the first three campaigns included:

1974 - family and marital conflict, the effect on

community and family life or migrant labour and the drift to the towns, cattle theft. village development, youth problems

1975 - government land reform proposal, TB, youth problems, stray cattle

1976 - VD, nutrition, sanitation.

The themes selected in the 1976 campaign and in subsequent campaigns were chosen on the basis of the following criteria:

- a modest target which groups can easily achieve
- problems which require a local response rather than government action (e.g. not the issue of unpaid headmen since this can only be solved by government)
- something concrete, specific (e.g. 'neglect of traditional practices' is too general)
- problems that individuals or individual families or groups can solve (e.g. large infrastructural projects which require the whole community should not be selected but left for Village Development Committees).
- problems whose solution can easily be supported by regular extension work.

Another development in the 1976 campaign was a more analytical approach to the drama scripting. Instead of creating the drama out of a common sense or "external expert" understanding of the problem, an intermediate step of problem analysis was introduced. This represented an attempt to get away from prescribing "text book" slogans (e.g. "Good nutrition means three balanced meals a day") and to take account of villagers' perceptions and the actual socio-economic situation. This took the form of a type of constraint analysis. This involves listing people's knowledge, attitudes and practice with respect to each problem; identifying

from this list the key constraints (e.g. misbeliefs, lack of resources); and deciding which of these constraints might be successfully challenged and which current practices should be built on and supported. Through this analysis participants work out a clear set of objectives and problems to be presented as a preliminary step to 'scripting' the drama, puppet play, dance and song.

In all of these discussions, the final yardstick is realism. Important constraints are identified, but only those that are considered to be amenable to change are introduced. For example, many people receive ineffective treatment for venereal disease from the traditional doctor, yet to discourage the use of traditional medicine would only antagonize people. In this situation, the actors chose as the main message men's responsibility for informing their lovers (since venereal disease is difficult to detect in women). Similarly, in the discussions on sanitation, the actors decided that the promotion of toilets at this stage would be unrealistic. Very few families have the resources or the motivation to build a toilet. As an alternative, the programme promoted the digging of a trench by each family and the practice of taking a shovel to cover one's excreta.

CASE 2: POPULAR THEATRE AND RESETTLEMENT EDUCATION

The Basarwa are the earliest inhabitants of Botswana, a group of nomadic hunters and gatherers who have survived off the land for hundreds of years. With the invasion of Batswana in the 1800's (themselves fleeing from colonial attack) many Basarwa were pushed off their land and became herdsmen for the cattle-owning Batswana, entering into a quasi-feudal patron-client relationship. In the western part of Botswana on the huge cattle ranches, the Basarwa are landless squatters, entirely dependent on and exploited by the cattle-owners for whom they work.

In 1977 a government survey revealed that the Basarwa had a strong desire to possess their own land

in order to escape the exploitation of the cattle-owners. The government decided to allocate land and drill boreholes in order to set up four new Basarwa communities. The new settlements were to be provided with basic services (e.g. primary school and health post), but beyond that the Basarwa were on their own.

In 1978 the government organized a series of workshops for each group of settlers before they moved to new communities. The purpose of each meeting was to give the new settlers an opportunity to meet (since they came from different farms and did not know one another) and to start talking about the problems and issues related to life in the new settlement.

Various methods were tried out at these workshops. Lectures and question-and-answer sessions tended to reinforce the participants' passivity, requiring them to sit back and listen to government representatives tell them what to do, rather than provoking them to tackle the problems themselves. Small group discussions seemed too academic and failed to generate the necessary enthusiasm and involvement.

In this situation, the organizers turned to participatory drama as a much more dynamic tool. Drama stimulates not only an analytical, but also an emotional response. It is a much more organic and integrated medium - the issues become alive because the participants are no longer talking academically about a future situation; they are in that situation and responding in an imaginative and creative way to its pressures and problems.

Drama also seemed more attuned to the organic way in which Basarwa relate to life. Their own forms of drama - story telling and dance dramas - are woven into the fabric of everyday life. By using this already familiar medium, Basarwa were encouraged to use their own cultural tools to understand and deal with the rapid changes in their situation.

For each workshop, the meeting place was set up as a theatre-in-the-round with easy access for the participants in the outer circle to join the original set of actors (about ten men and women in the middle). Each drama started with a plot worked out beforehand. The new settlers gather around a fire in the new community. They are talking about the borehole and how they can afford to run and maintain it. Then the conversation shifts to their general subsistence. Each gives his or her proposal. One person becomes angry and threatens to go back to the farms. The group tells him to wait to hear what the government says. Several say they should ask the government for rations and diesel oil for the borehole engine.

Then two government officers arrive. The Basarwa are submissive and servile. The senior government officer (talking in Setswana) paints a pretty picture, praising the government's contribution (land, borehole, school, health post) and exhorting them to work hard and build their own communities: "Remember, self-reliance is a national principle and we expect everyone to support it". He continues on in this vague and indirect but diplomatic way. Then it is the translator's turn. Speaking in Sesarwa, he is very short and blunt: "What he is saying is, no rations, no petrol for your borehole engine. You're on your own. We're giving you nothing". The Basarwa ask a few questions to confirm this view. When they realize they can get nothing more out of the government, the questioning stops. The government officers leave.

The rest of the drama was built around the basic situation of group discussion around the fire. After each disruption by other events, the group returned to this core situation, in which the implications of each new event were discussed or presented in mime.

Once the actors became caught up in the plot and began to really feel themselves in that situation, the "play" took off. New situations and issues developed as people started to deal in an imaginative way with each other and their new situation. These

were fed into the drama from the "inside" or "outside": actors created new situations themselves or participants in the outer circle joined the drama, bringing in new problems. The organizers fed in issues where necessary by encouraging certain participants in the outer circle to take a problem into the drama or by joining the drama themselves in the role of government officers.

At the first workshop where this technique was used, the actors started to improvise their reaction to the opening situation - the discussion of their subsistence - entirely spontaneously. They started to mime how they would use their hunting and collecting skills to find food and how they would make leather goods and handicrafts for sale. A few men returned to the farms to work on behalf of the group. One man from the "audience" played the role of a Boer coming to hire men as trackers - the men refused to go, saying he first had to get clearance from the District Council.

Other problem situations which came up in these workshops included:

- a man returning sick from the farms
- game scouts chasing poachers
- police investigating cattle theft
- a report that the borehole has broken down
- a man complaining about the difficulty of getting supplies from the nearest town
- a farm worker complaining about life on the farms
- a Mosarwa from a different "tribe" coming to join the settlement
- the arrival of a government officer.

Popular theatre used in this way became a type of simulation game without documents and role cards. It was less structured than the typical simulation game - the events were not pre-packaged or scripted.

There was room for participants to choose the issues and situations which are important to them. It gave them the opportunity to paint their own future in an imaginative yet realistic way. Instead of the learning experience being structured for them (by government officers), they chose what is important, they determined what is possible. And because of the sense of community, of collective expression that is found in Basarwa life the statements and actions of the acting group became in one sense collective statements for the whole group. The actors (who changed throughout this continuous play) spoke for all the participants.

Based upon immediate experience, this type of theatre grows spontaneously from the audience's participation and their emotional response to the situation. At best it is almost unconscious - the audience becomes involved without realizing it. There is a certain element of risk since the participants themselves determine what situations are important and their reactions to them - they may choose to be passive or to represent a totally fatalistic outlook. Yet to take this risk is important; it is the placing of the "power" of role-playing directly into the hands of the participants which makes this approach liberating.

The role-playing provides an opportunity for participants to explore their new situation, to experience working with a new group of people, to escape from passivity and dependence, and even to test out aggressive behaviour (e.g. demanding their rights from government, employers, etc.). It is a way of testing out behaviour without being threatened by the real-life consequences of the action. A Mosarwa who strikes back against an arrogant "boss" in a drama is not subject to the consequences this action would bring in real life. Yet if the role-playing is realistic, people can learn from it and can begin to understand and deal with some of the problems they will face in their future situation.

In this use of theatre, discussion became part

of the performance rather than something separate from it. A critical analysis of each event developed spontaneously. Each new event was discussed around the fire by the actors and also by the audience who were watching.

In simulation games, there is often a "control" function to stop or correct responses in the game situation. In this case, the "control" function was shared among all the participants. When anyone saw something unrealistic, he or she pointed it out. Where there was a lack of information, the organizers and other government resource people intervened to provide it, but they made their points in role.

CASE 3: POPULAR THEATRE AND FREIRIAN LITERACY WORK

Popular theatre has also been used in literacy work in Botswana. The Freirian approach used in this programme was seen as necessary, given Botswana's harsh environmental conditions and social relationships. Drought is a regular feature of life, destroying initiative and making many people dependent on others. Some are forced by these conditions (about one-third of the male labour force) to find a livelihood in South Africa where their dependence is further reinforced. The women left behind are largely on their own in caring for the family and producing what is needed to meet the household's needs. Many of the families have no cattle or land of their own and are totally dependent on meagre wages from cattle-owners. The Freirian method was seen as a means of challenging the prevailing apathy, of encouraging people to take responsibility for dealing with their situation.

In Brazil and Chile, Freire used pictures to spark off discussion. In experimenting with this medium in Botswana, it was discovered that pictures were not a sufficient stimulus: often participants had difficulty understanding the context of a picture, in many cases the pictures could only provide a narrow image of the whole issue, and for some issues

it was difficult to find a suitable representation. For these reasons the literacy programme organizers decided to add an additional medium - story telling - as a catalyst for discussion.

The stories were produced on the basis of problem research in the target villages (i.e., open-ended discussions with small groups of adults contacted in a very informal way - at the water supply, outside the clinic, at beer parties, and at individual homes). The results were analysed and stories written in a material production workshop similar to the Laedza Batanani pre-campaign community workshop. Direct quotes from the problem-research interviews were used in the "problem-stories" so that they reflected both the perspective and expressions of potential literacy participants. Some examples are:

> To plough is to gamble. Even if you plough early enough, the rains may disappear and your crops die.
>
> Nutrition means money. The only balanced food for children is found at the shop.
>
> Women look after children while men are busy enjoying life. When you warn your husband about leaving you, along with the children, he beats you and his girlfriend beats you too.
>
> If there is no rain, there is no life - we can't plough and we're forced to go to South Africa.
>
> When we try to warn young people about their misbehaviour, they say we have no education, no civilization. What is needed are hard lashes at the 'kgotla'.
>
> We go to the mines in South Africa because here in our country we're not the "right type of people" for work. They keep saying, "Where's your certificate or experience?". We don't know when we're going to get this "experience" because we never get jobs.

Prices go up because of those lucky enough to have jobs getting increases in their salaries. They go up because of "Development", but this actually hurts the poor and causes hunger.

We don't like this business of applying for land from the Land Board. Soon we'll be told to buy land as if we're buying a tractor. Because of the difficulty of getting the grain to the depot, we're forced to sell it to the Boers who come and cheat us with low prices. Later in the summer they sell it back to us at high prices.

Hunting is like buying mealie-meal... you've got to pay for it. But we can't afford the licenses. Wild animals destroy our crops but the government won't let us hunt them.

If you're married you have to accept what your husband says even if you disagree. Sometimes you're taken to the lands to spend the rest of your life there, not coming to town.

Firewood has become a business. People come in trucks and steal all our wood. Our area is completely bare. We now have to walk miles to find even one stick of wood. And it's hard to get wood without a wagon because they are all as fat as England.

In the literacy group sessions, which were attended primarily by women, these comments were read out by the "animateur" and then discussed by the group. (A flipchart picture representing a critical incident in the story provided an additional focus for the discussion.) In several cases, the situation was dramatized by the group.

Outside the literacy meetings, some groups used drama as a technique to start others in the village talking about some of the issues. Groups presented

skits on tuberculosis, malnutrition, sanitation, and over-drinking at public meetings. In a few cases, this provided the impetus for community-wide action.

Drama provided an important experience for the literacy participants in the development of their self-confidence - a major objective of the programme. It helped to revitalize collective work and activity by women, and even more important, provided a focus and impetus for their increased participation in community decision making. The occasion of over 100 women (in each community) meeting regularly and discussing important local issues gave them the self-confidence and solidarity necessary to act on their analysis of a problem. For example, in one community the women organized a 'kgotla' - an event usually run by men - in which they challenged a local shopkeeper and the local clinic staff, which they felt were mistreating them. In another case, the women sent a group to protest against the pollution of their water supply by the neighbouring hospital. A modest beginning, but it demonstrates the potential for women who are working, discussing, and organizing together in groups to take a greater measure of control over their lives.

Drama was also used in the organizational and leadership training stages of the project. In order to publicize the programme, extension staff in each village put on a drama about illiteracy at the 'kgotla'. This proved to be an effective device for recruiting literacy "animateurs" and participants. In training workshops for the "animateurs", drama also played a major role:

a) as a "warm-up"exercise helpful in building confidence and active participation;
b) as a technique practised at the leaders' workshop for use with literacy groups;
c) as codes for developing the critical awareness of the leaders themselves - in particular challenging their view of how they should relate to their literacy group.

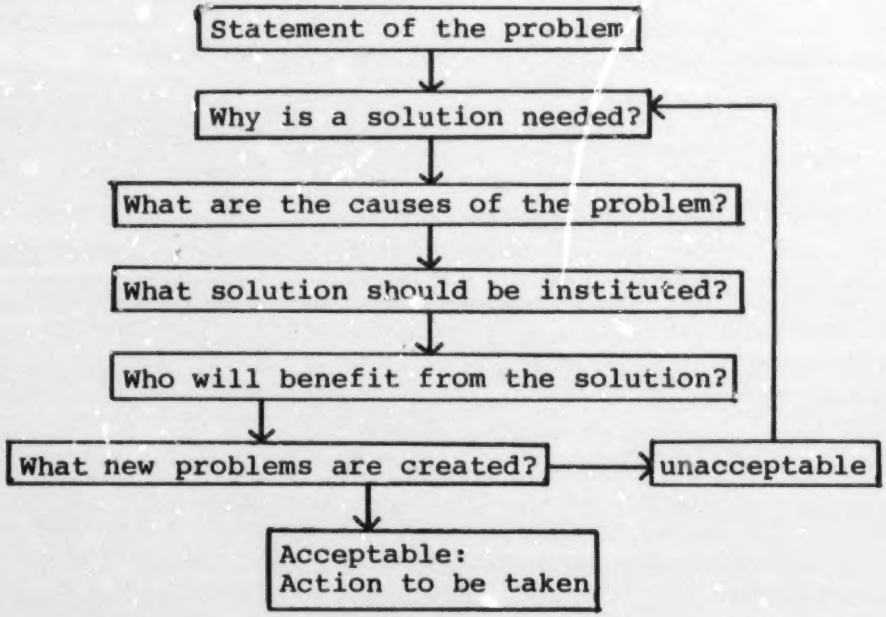
For the latter purpose, a special puppet play was devised which dramatized in a bold, hard-hitting way the contrast between authoritarian and non-authoritarian styles of leadership.

CASE 4: PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH, PUPPETRY, AND APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY

Botswana's Rural Industries Innovation Center (RIIC), which was established in 1974, combines a research and extension function with the design of appropriate technologies for rural development. In order to establish guidelines for its activities, RIIC started with a research project to determine the problems, preferred solutions, and priorities of neighbouring villages. This coincided with a similar interest by district officials in consultation as a preliminary step in drawing up the district development plan. They decided to combine their efforts.

Teams of field workers were trained to interview members of every village development committee in the district. The interviews were open-ended and attempted to engage the participants in a dialogue on their situation. This process was seen as more than mere data collection; it was also designed to serve as an education programme in which participants started to develop a critical understanding of their situation and some of the directions in which they could take action. Each dialogue therefore went beyond a mere listing of common complaints - participants were encouraged to reflect more critically about each of the statements they made, and to analyse possible solutions. Where necessary, additional factual information was provided - for example, on alternative technologies - but in a way that was as culturally neutral as possible. The interviewers avoided "selling" technologies in a propagandistic way; participants were involved in assessing the suitability of each proposed technology - its raw materials, design, usefulness, cost and cultural acceptability.

The "dialogue" followed this sequence of steps:


Statement of the problem
Why is a solution needed?
What are the causes of the problem?
What solution should be instituted?
Who will benefit from the solution?
What new problems are created?
unacceptable
Acceptable:
Action to be taken

The consultation thus demonstrated in clear terms the people's role in defining and directing the development process. This was reflected in the programme slogan: "To be fully human, an individual should be free to be critical of and creative with his own environment". (Carruthers, 1978)

For RIIC, this initial baseline research represented only the first stage of a continuing dialogue with villages on their problems, alternative ways of solving them (technical and human), and strategies for action. Its extension staff have been using puppetry and drama as means for codifying the priority issues identified in the first-stage research, in order to regenerate the dialogue in each village. Again a performance is seen as the catalyst - a vivid way of presenting issues so that people want to talk about them. Discussions follow a format similar to

that of the initial interviews. As a beginning, RIIC is working out single-theme, "pre-packaged" puppet plays performed by its own staff. Later, when they feel more confident with this medium, they may move to more participatory theatre, preparing drama sketches on the spot with local people.

ASSESSMENT

This section will attempt to analyze the work done so far particularly in relation to the Laedza Batanani project, and suggest some new directions which might bring this activity more in line with its original objectives.

Freire's ideas on education and social change influenced the original conception of these programmes. They were meant to

- increase participation of rural villagers
- deepen critical awareness
- mobilize community members for community action.

Their actual achievements can be measured against each of these original objectives. What will become apparent is a clear distortion of Freire's ideas in each case - the result of both inadequate understanding and structural limitations. While a genuine attempt was made to operationalize what Freire meant by "participation", "critical analysis" and "action", in practice these concepts have been given reformist interpretations.

PARTICIPATION

Participation is both goal and methodology; the popular theatre programme attempts to increase participation of community members in development

projects by involving them in the planning and running of the popular theatre programme. In the case of Laedza Batanani this means involving rural villagers in the community workshop, the organizing committee, the performing team and the community festival itself (joining in the songs and the post-performance discussion).

However, to throw all of these activities into a participation list mystifies the basic issue. Participation is not just "song and dance". A villager may join in the songs and participate actively in the discussion but this is a different form of participation than selecting the campaign issues and structuring how they are to be presented for discussion. The key question is: who controls the process? Popular theatre may be "participatory" in the sense that local people are involved in producing it, in acting out the dramas and singing the songs but unless they control the selection of content and the whole educational process they may become willing accomplices in their own domestication. (Williams, 1971). Participation as mere performance is no guarantee of progressive change; unless rural villagers control the popular theatre process they may be used as mere mouthpieces for ideas produced by others which mystify their reality and condition them to accept a passive, dependent, uncritical role in an inequitable social structure.

In Laedza Batanani the whole process is controlled by the more powerful members of the community - the government workers and community leaders. They attend the pre-campaign community workshops and decided on the issues. While the additional involvement of community leaders in this process is better than government workers doing this on their own it still represents a grouping of interests within the village which are not representative of those of the majority. This is demonstrated by the choice of issues - in 1974, for example, this group selected cattle theft as the major problem, an issue which is clearly not a high priority for the majority of rural families who own no cattle at all. In 1976 the choice of health

issues - VD, nutrition, sanitation - were clearly influenced by the large and vocal participation of the government health staff. While Laedza Batanani has definitely attracted a lot of interest it continues to reflect the viewpoints and interests of these two dominant groups in Botswana - civil servants and the larger cattle owners - rather than providing a voice and an organizing tool for marginal groups.

In the other popular theatre programmes community participation tends to be token. Government extension staff plan and organize the whole activity with a minimum of participation from community leaders. They have the transport, the resources and the time and they are expected to get something done - as they usually run the programme on their own with little help from local villagers. Their views tend to influence not only the selection of issues but also the way in which the issues are raised. This is indicated, for example, by the negative stereotyping of the traditional doctor in several plays performed by health educators. (Kraai et al, 1979). It is also evident in plays giving greater attention to technical solutions than to changes in social relations.

One recent innovation in popular theatre practice has attempted to overcome this problem. As an alternative to the community workshop as the source of issues, field workers have been trained to conduct informal interviews with people on a house-to-house basis. They walk around the village, meeting individuals and groups in their homes, at the borehole or clinic, at the shebeen or store, etc., trying to draw out the concerns and opinions of all sectors of the community, rich and poor, male and female, old and young. This practice of field interviewing, of listening to what the ordinary villagers have to say is a step forward. It is a giant step ahead of conventional extension practice in which those with no cattle are virtually ignored. It helps in a small way to break down the pattern of problem diagnosis and solution prescription

by external "experts" and to make field workers understand problems from the perspective of all sections of the rural community. Of course it is unrealistic "to expect a totally flexible response to the articulation of local viewpoints when extension agents are themselves so rigidly 'constructed' as technocrats". (Johnny and Richards, 1982).

Where field workers have used this approach of sounding out broad-based opinion or where initiatives have been taken by community groups themselves (e.g. the Oodi weavers) the issues chosen have been a clear expression of popular concerns rather than the more technicist predispositions of government field staff. For example, a recurring issue in a number of campaigns has been the domineering and bureaucratic treatment of patients by clinic nurses (the most visible civil servants operating at the village level); in a popular theatre campaign planned for the Kgalagadi District the Basarwa (Bushmen) demanded that it deal with the harassment they face from government wildlife officers; other community-controlled campaigns have addressed the issues of negligence by the headman or village development committee members and conflict between councillors, headmen and villagers.

In all of these cases popular theatre has proven to be an important tool for raising sensitive issues which might otherwise never be dealt with, provoking people to talk about them, and providing a forum to discuss them. It has provided a limited opportunity for oppressed groups to express their grievances. For example, women have praised Laedza Batanani for raising issues that they felt reluctant to talk about in normal situations:

> Laedza Batanani is a good way of getting people to talk about problems - easier than wives on their own trying to argue with their husbands. The drama helps to show men what women don't like.

It has given marginal groups in rural communities a certain assurance that they can argue back, that they can challenge being mistreated; and it has served

as a mild corrective to bureaucratic arrogance, local corruption, or inactive traditional leadership.* It may lead to increased consciousness of the class nature of rural development. It has also served to raise some of the contradictions in government development practices - a source of new understanding by extension staff.**

The problem, however, is that community-controlled popular theatre, in the progressive sense, is still in the minority. On the whole popular theatre is being used in the conventional mode of putting across extension messages rather than as a means of expressing popular concerns, a vehicle for challenging conventional practices or ways of thinking. Although it started as an attempt to

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* Botswana has a tradition of using songs as an accepted vehicle for criticizing the misbehaviour of leaders.

** In the VD Campaign (Laedza Batanani 1976) the government practice of treating VD through three injections of penicillin over a 3-week period (since health services in the area are once-a-week mobile visits) was questioned by villagers and other methods of providing quicker treatment were suggested.

Popular theatre's role as a means of structuring popular evaluations of development programmes, of "generating alternative versions of development problems acceptable to disadvantaged groups" has received excellent treatment in an article by Johnny and Richards (1980). They argue that popular theatre should be used not as a tool for disseminating development messages but as a village-controlled medium for critiquing development policies and programmes - a source of evaluation and a means of educating field workers about the socio-political realities of development work.

develop popular education organized by rural villagers themselves, it has become on the whole just a new gimmick for top-down message-oriented campaigns run and controlled by government extension departments.

So far the discussion has been limited to participation as methodology. But what about participation as a goal? The organizers viewed this goal as one of overcoming low participation, of motivating people, of arousing them to take a more active part in development. They accepted the notion that the key constraint was apathy or indifference.* While this view seems Freirian - Freire advocates that the consciousness of the oppressed is one of the constraints on social transformation - in practice it represents a distortion.

Apathy in a Freirian sense can only be defined in dialectical terms - as a response to oppressive relations. Peasants are "apathetic" only in the sense that they have been forced to internalize the oppressor's ideology, to accept a subservient and passive role within an exploitative structure. Or as Malik (1977) has explained, resistance to change is often the most rational strategy for peasants in an oppressive social structure.

In the case of Laedza Batanani (and the Sri Lankan and Tanzanian programmes) "apathy" is given a totally different meaning - it seems to be presented as a self-inflicted characteristic of rural villagers. No account is given of why villagers refuse to attend development meetings or take part in communal projects. "Apathy" is simply explained as a constraint on development - a condition out of which villagers need to be "aroused" or "shaken". Without a clear explanation of its historical and socio-political roots, apathy takes on the function of an explanatory cause of poverty/

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* This programme goal is similar to that of the Sarvodaya movement of Sri Lanka which also emphasizes the motivational factor, the need to arouse people from apathy. The Tanzanian literacy programme has adopted a similar objective: "to shake peasants out of their lethargy".

underdevelopment, rather than being understood as a symptom of or a response to an inequitable social structure. In this way the Freirian concept of a "culture of silence" is converted into the "blaming the victim" ideology of conventional development work.* Villagers are "underdeveloped" because they are "apathetic" and "resistant to change"; the role, then, of the development programme is "to shake them out of their lethargy". This different understanding than Freire's of the basic cause of underdevelopment helps to explain why the proposed solution - that of "consciousness-raising" - takes on a different meaning than Freirian conscientization. This will be discussed in detail in the following section.

The failure to analyze the real reasons for low participation also helps to explain why participation was adopted as a community-wide objective. Clearer analysis would have shown class differentiation in participation (e.g. the domination of women's groups by elite women in the community) which in turn would have called for a more strategic use of Laedza Batanani as an organizing tool for the less privileged members of the community.

CRITICAL AWARENESS

Another espoused goal of Laedza Batanani is to facilitate critical thinking. This attempt to raise critical consciousness is evident in several aspects of the methodology -

- the initial stage of finding out the concerns of community members
- the use of analysis in the pre-campaign planning workshops

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* A more detailed description/analysis of this distortion process is given in Kidd/Kumar (1981).

- the post-performance community "dialogue".

While each of these appears to be consistent with the Freirian method of problem-posing dialogue, in practice it is quite different.

The use of constraint analysis in the pre-campaign workshops is the clearest indication of a shift in approach. Instead of unveiling structural relationships, of identifying historical, economic and political factors to explain rural problems, "constraint analysis" has tended to focus on technical matters. For example, the analysis of VD is limited to an explication of its symptoms, causes, cure, and prevention. While it is important for people to have a scientific understanding of this disease, it is equally important for them to see how this disease is socially produced. VD is not a natural aspect of life in southern Africa; it is produced as a direct consequence of the intolerable conditions imposed on migrant labourers in the South African mines. Forced to live for long periods of time away from their wives, the miners turn to prostitutes and alcohol as a response to the alienating situation. VD is retransmitted to the countryside each time a new group of migrant labourers returns home. This disease, then, is socially produced by the political and economic structures in southern Africa; penicillin treatment at the clinic can only be a partial solution.

The analysis of VD in Laedza Batanani does deal with some of the social, non-technical aspects, for example the embarrassment of women as a major constraint to treatment, but the men tend to be blamed rather than the exploitative social system. They are left with a sense of guilt, that it is their "promiscuity" which is the ultimate problem and not the social system which destroys family life. They are expected to change their behaviour rather than the structures which reproduce this disease.

Secondly, there has been no attempt to analyze problems in terms of their different "versions" - the different ways they are perceived by different social

classes (i.e. the different class interests they represent).* For example in the 1974 campaign some of the villagers produced their own folk song praising a local cattle thief; this song, of course, could not have been very popular among the larger cattle-owners. For the poor dirnking is an outlet from the pressures of a fragmented existence; for the rich (who own the bottle stores and bars) drinking is both entertainment and a way of making money. These different versions could have been dialectically analyzed in order to bring out a version acceptable to the majority of villagers - e.g. non-stockholders, cattle-workers, etc.

Thirdly, the problems identified in pre-campaign workshops have been treated as discrete problems requiring separate solutions; there has been little or no analysis of their linkages or common roots in the political economic structure. The process of "brainstorming" problems may be a useful start but unless it is followed up with a study of the connections between problems, symptoms may be misdiagnosed as the real causes and the economic and political roots of problems mystified. For example, many of the problems listed have their origins in the migrant labour system - e.g. family conflicts, rural unemployment, alcoholism, etc. - yet they are treated as isolated problems and diagnosed in terms of morality or the behaviour of the "victims" rather than the social structures which underpin these problems.

Fourthly, the emphasis has been on solving individual problems rather than on understanding

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* This is related to the earlier point of failing to produce programme content which reflects the class position of the majority of community members.

why these problems exist in the first place. This emphasis has been conditioned by the organizers' preoccupation with technical solutions and an inadequate understanding of what Freire means by problem-posing. By an unconscious sleight-of-hand problem-posing has been converted into problem-solving. "Problem-posing" makes one question the deeper structures; it is a process of challenging commonly accepted ideas, of posing more and more questions to dig beneath the conventional explanations of reality, of raising and analyzing contradictions; its object is understanding. "Problem-solving", on the other hand, is a more pragmatic concern with immediate relief, with symptomatic treatment, and therefore easily falls into the conventional extension exercise of looking for technically appropriate solutions. The post-performance dialogue adopts this problem-solving approach. Instead of focusing on the real causes, on analyzing the political economic and historical basis of material conditions, it concentrates on generating solutions which often represent short-term symptomatic treatment or unrealistic proposals for action which fail to consider the real constraints and possibilities within the power structure.

Fifthly, the analysis is limited to the village rather than the entire social formation of which it is a part. This is evident, for example, in the analysis of nutrition which does identify inequitable food distribution within the family (with the father getting a larger share) but fails to show the larger socio-political context (e.g. structural and class constraints on subsistence production) which conditions this inequity. A "victim-blaming" analysis is produced condemning the migrant labourers rather than the social structures which inhibit subsistence production and condition unequal distribution of income. Migrant labour is mentioned as one of the problems but there is no attempt to show how this institution and the policies behind it produce the "rural slum".

By looking at the village as if it is an autonomous unit independent of the larger social structures, attention is shifted away from what the dominant class in southern Africa is doing to what the villagers are "doing to themselves". This narrowly focused analysis inevitably produces "victim-blaming" explanations of rural problems. We have seen earlier how poor attendance at village meetings was explained in terms of villagers' apathy rather than the way in which this rural malaise has been historically produced. Behavioural characteristics - illiteracy, low production, poor kgotla attendance, cattle-stealing, alcoholism, etc. - are interpreted as inherent defects, as a "culture of poverty", rather than the symptoms of exploitative social relations:

> "Lacking structural perception, men attribute the sources of their situation to something within themselves rather than to something in objective reality". (Freire, 1970, p. 36)

Critical consciousness, then, has been given a totally different meaning in the Botswana popular theatre work. For Freire emergent consciousness is characterized by historical understanding, a clear insight into essential cause-effect relationships, and an overcoming of false consciousness (i.e. of ahistorical thinking and misconstructions of cause and effect). In Laedza Batanani critical consciousness has been interpreted in an everyday sense of "being aware of local problems and information needed to solve the problems".

This diluted form of conscientization can be explained by the modernization framework in which it operates. It assumes a dualistic economy in which the modern sector is attempting to transform (read "modernize") the traditional sector. Within this framework the role of non-formal education is to teach "modernizing" behaviour. Over the last two decades this dualistic theory has been seriously challenged. Rural communities

are not removed from the modern sector; they are conditioned by and play an important role within the modern sector:

> "The marked 'traditionalism' of many contemporary African villages is not a product of isolation but of the over-strong relationship between the village as a supplier and multi-national company-dominated mining interests as employers of cheap labour". (Johnny and Richards, 1982)

Rural villages in Botswana have the role of reproducing the labour requirements. The "apathy", "lack of unified effort", the "disorganization" of Botswana villages is not a self-induced phenomenon; it is a historical outcome of the social policies of South African capitalism. Historically South Africa has needed a cheap labour supply and this has required the underdevelopment of rural villages in the countries surrounding South Africa - through taxation, commoditization, the closure of South African markets to Botswana agricultural products, etc. If the rural villages were thriving, well-organized, self-reliant communities villagers would not need to leave their homes to find work in South Africa. The marginalization, the destruction of Botswana's rural economy has been historically induced.

In implicitly adopting this modernization framework, the organizers of Laedza Batanani have accepted that the key constraint in rural development is knowledge or apathy rather than opportunity. They have fallen back into conventional practice of putting across technical information or of trying to "spark" interest through an unconventional medium - rather than developing critical insight, organizing among the non-stock holders or challenging vested interests. By accepting the modernization framework they are forced to explain what is happening within the "traditional sector" as if it is internally produced, as if all the problems are locally created. Once they accept this view they are compelled to adopt the

logical consequence, i.e. that change can only take place as a result of techniques and skills they can bring or prescribe from outside - the so-called "modernizing behaviours".

The key social problems - the migrant labour system, inequities in cattle ownership, insufficient draught power and labour power accessible to female-headed households, etc. - are not addressed; instead Laedza Batanani deals with the "deviant" behaviour of the poor - the bad habits, the attitudes they are expected to change. Freire, of course, also talks about a change in behaviour, but for Freire this means overcoming passivity - challenging inequity, questioning the social order rather than reaffirming it. Conscientization does not mean accepting new moral injunctions - e.g. stealing less cattle, attending village meetings, contributing labour to village development projects - which may simply further one's incorporation into the system. It is to question the exhortations and slogans of the dominant class, examining whose interests are actually being served.

ACTION

For Freire authentic dialogue must lead to action. In Laedza Batanani and the other popular theatre programmes the performances and discussion have lead to very little action. The popular theatre event tends to be a "one-off" activity in which people come together, talk about issues and go home. There is limited follow-up of a collective nature; the event is rarely used to organize people for action nor built into an on-going organizational process. Encalada (1979) has called this type of communication convocatory communication to differentiate communication which simply "calls people together" from more productive modes of communication which are used within a process of building an organization and taking action. The Botswana popular theatre programme to date falls within the first

category.

In the first two years of Laedza Batanani there was a certain naive expectation that community action would somehow follow from the heightened interest generated by the popular theatre event. When this failed to materialize, the organizers planned a follow-up programme to encourage action. Instead of making this a community-controlled activity, the organizers built this programme around the regular work of government extension staff. This implied a lack of confidence in existing village institutions but there was no effort to analyze why these institutions were failing.

Community inertia can only be understood in terms of the historical role Botswana villages have played in providing labour for the South African mines and the relationships between various classes in Botswana rural society. During the colonial era taxation, commoditization, and other measures forced large numbers of poorer peasants into oscillating labour migration. This has been reinforced before and after Independence by the increasing monopolization of agricultural resources (e.g. draught power) by the larger cattle-owners. The export of labour has produced a drain on rural production and has exacerbated the situation of rural women who have had to shoulder additional responsibilities for subsistence production and the burden of reproducing the labour force for South African mines and industry.

The migrant labour system and the undermining of traditional authority since Independence have disrupted traditional social organization. In the past a villager's participation on a communal project could be enforced by the power of the chief; age-regiments (mephato) were the organizational vehicle for a range of construction and other village projects. With the withdrawal of labour by the mines and the erosion of the power of traditional leaders there has been less labour available for self-help projects and no authority to compel participation in them. The new structures created since Independence, e.g. the village development committees, have not yet won wide-spread support. At the same time "there is a contradiction in advocating

self-help when government policies such as giving food for work in drought periods and massive provision of physical facilities have encouraged a concept of development that regards government action as a source of change". (Kraai et al, 1979).

From this it is clear that Laedza Batanani started with an inadequate understanding of the power structures within which it was working and an unrealistic expectation of the power of popular theatre. It defined the key problem it was addressing as lack of community participation but failed to see the underlying roots of this inertia. It also assumed, as in most community development programmes, a community of interests, failing to recognize the differing class interests within rural society and the lack of homogeneity for purposes of organizing. Without an insight into the mechanisms of power it set out to "awaken community awareness and action" with no clear organizational strategy beyond that of bringing people together for a performance and discussion. It assumed that people would somehow mobilize for action as long as there was increased motivation and awareness. It therefore ran smack into the problem it was trying to overcome; nothing happened at the end of the performance and discussion because there was no organizational structure for making it happen. People remained inactive because there was no commonly accepted institutional framework in which initiative could be taken. The popular theatre aspect - no matter how effective in attracting a crowd or raising important issues - could not conjure up on its own the organizational structure needed or provide itself the driving force for a programme of social action.*

This points to the need for a strategy which

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* A certain "media fixation" - a common feature of many media-based programmes for social change - has been a major factor in this mystification of the power of popular theatre as a catalyst for social change.

explicitly serves the more underprivileged groups in rural Botswana - making the resources of popular theatre more accessible to and within the control of these groups, addressing their problems and issues, and, most important, relating to an on-going process of organizing these groups. It also requires a reassessment of the role of popular theatre. Popular theatre can no longer be seen as the driving force for a programme of social action; it must be viewed as one element among others in a sustained organizing process.

CONCLUSION

Popular theatre in Botswana has taken a pseudo-Freirian course, shifting away from its espoused goals of authentic participation, critical awareness, and collective action. This has been produced by inadequate understanding of the power structures at village, national, and international levels and by the technocratic conditioning and modernization framework of the organizers.

A realignment with the original goals would require:

- a shift towards genuine popular participation, by moving away from an undifferentiated community-wide approach (in which the more powerful community members dominate) to a more strategic approach directed to the most oppressed sectors of the rural community (e.g. women, non-stock-holders, etc.) and assuring participant control over the programme
- a shift away from a popular-theatre oriented programme to a sustained programme of group organization, education, and action in which popular theatre is given a more narrowly defined, less prominent role
- a critical assessment of the social and political context and a more strategic sense of the possibilities and constraints for change.

These case studies are examples, of how Friere's ideas have been distorted in ways which potentially could intensify the oppression of powerless groups in the Third World. They show how progressive-sounding development rhetoric can obscure the reality of class stratification and power structures and mystify the actual impact of development programmes, and point to the need on a much wider scale for political economic analysis of development programmes.

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TYPE OF PROGRAMME	1) PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION	2) PROBLEM ANALYSIS	3) CODIFICATION	4) PRESENTATION OF CODE	5) DISCUSSION OF CODE	6) ACTION
A Community Education Campaigns (e.g. Laedza Batanani)	Workshop of community leaders & extension staff: problem listing & priority selection	Actors workshop: constraint analysis	Actors workshop: agreement on plot and characterization then improvisation	Kgotla presentation by mobile team of actor-animateurs	Small group problem-solving discussion in kgotla led by actor-animateurs	Follow-up programme run by extension workers as part of their regular work
B Participatory Drama: Theatre as Process (e.g. Resettlement Education)	Spontaneous response to situation - part of performance, not separate from it. Problems are identified and analysed within the context of a drama.		Improvisation in response to real issues/ problems	'Participatory' theatre: presentation by the whole group (no separation between actors and audience)	A spontaneous part of performance, not separate from performance	
C Freirian Literacy Work	Open-ended, informal discussion of problems with, groups found at random in the village.	Literacy staff workshop: constraint analysis	Literacy staff workshop: story written for each problem incorporating direct quotes from research	1) story reading by literacy group leader, or 2) dramatization by literacy group members	Literacy group problem-solving discussion facilitated by flip-chart picture of key incident in story (drama)	Action by literacy group including public drama presentation to motivate participation by whole community
D Extension Work in Appropriate Technology	Problem- solving discussion with village development committee (following fixed sequence of questions)		Staff workshop: problem-drama (puppet play) prepared for each priority problem	Kgotla presentation by RIIC staff	Problem-solving discussion with village development committee	Construction and use of appropriate technologies, assisted by RIIC

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The Participatory Research Group is a non-profit collective of adult educators and researchers working for progressive social change. Since 1976 we have produced a range of analytical and popular materials. We also produce a biannual newsletter, organize workshops and conferences. We have worked with labour, native, community, women's and public interest groups in the areas of popular and adult education, organizational development, research and evaluation.